I: Good afternoon and thank you so much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper. I want to step by giving you some legal information regarding data protection. The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I will need you to sign the data consent form within the protocols of the university that I'm serving my bachelor's thesis. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk to you and you can leave it at any time. I would like to ask for your consent to record this conversation, as this would make it easier for me to analyze the data later. I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R6: Yes.

I: So this interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the contents of the interview are anonymous and will be used only for my thesis. Do you have any questions before we start?

R6: No.

I: So my first question is how do you personally define sustainability?

R6: To me sustainability is, I would say, general care. Whether that's your actions or through general thought process, whatever may be for the environment on the planet.

I: Okay, and can you elaborate on that? So what kind of actions or thought processes would you associate with sustainability?

R6: Yeah, so I think you can kind of go either extremely minimalist or maximalist, or anywhere between or beyond or maybe not beyond. Where a minimalist and sustainability might take a role like turning off the lights or not leaving the sink on while they brush their teeth, whereas a maximalist might go the full 100 yards where they're like… I don't know, yeah, what would they do? I don't know, generate their own electricity for example or like compost, stuff like that. And so to me I think as long as you have sort of a general or you're showing a general responsibility towards the climate towards the environment then I think that you I think that's sustainability.

I: Perfect. So to what extent would you say that you are concerned about environmental issues And are you taking any actions in your daily life to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R6: Yeah, absolutely. I'm super interested in sustainability; I want to go into sustainability actually as a post-grad career opportunity, hopefully that works out. But it's an everyday day-to-day life I will… for example,I lost my water bottle the other day. I usually carry a water bottle, but I lost it. Instead of buying a plastic water bottle, I bought a recyclable aluminum water bottle. So it's kind of just like smaller actions, turning off the lights after I'm done with the room

like I said or you know, I don't have a car so trying to go on the bike if I need to get anywhere or walk, stuff like that. And then kind of just like a larger scale, I'm involved in a few initiatives at my home university in San Diego in advocating for sustainability, and I'm also interning at a nonprofit that deals with sustainability as well currently. So kind of a lot of smaller and maybe larger actions too as you can track.

I: Perfect. So what do you care about when you buy package food or package goods? So what do you pay attention to, is it visuals or anything like that? What do you usually pay attention to?

R6: Yeah, so I think aesthetic is one. I really want to make sure that I, you know, am buying things that are aligned with my own personal beliefs, I think. And that usually falls aesthetics, so whether it looks nicer or it looks maybe a little bit more artificial, maybe won't be attracted as much. Or yeah, color, I try and go for greener things because to me that is like associated with sustainability or at least like some care. What else? Yeah, and I also look at… I know that for some packaged goods like you can't recycle that, especially if it has food waste on it you can't recycle that in the end. So I try and make sure that if there is a way to recycle it then I can at least clean it beforehand. Like I'll just wash out, you know, food waste if I need to. Sometimes some packaging is harder to do than others so I'll maybe go for an easier packaging when it comes to I guess the And of the product I thought.

I: And you mentioned that you give importance to aesthetics. So with the aesthetics, what kind of aesthetics do you look for? Do you look for like really minimal, do you look for a lot of visuals, a lot of colors, like what draws you to a certain package?

R6: I think honestly like I want to say it's minimal, but in the end I think that I tend to be drawn towards very like maximalist products almost because, for example, in the United States there are a lot of like food products that are popping up everywhere. For example, protein bars or whatever where they kind of give you like the story of the product or the story of the company on the back. For example, it explains, you know, the five ingredients. Like an RX bar. It's a really popular protein bar here, And that says it's just made out of egg whites, Bubble, and that's a pretty like it's pretty minimalist in like the way that they design it but very maximalist and the way that it like is actually portrayed just because you don't need to put all of that information. But as a consumer I like to like know you know more about the product that I'm choosing, especially if I have two products in front of me, it helps a little bit with that decision process.

I: So you prefer packages that look pretty and aesthetic but still provide a lot of information. So What kind of packages do you buy? Can you give me some examples of package goods you bought lately? For example milk, veggies, frozen food, anything like that?

R6: Yeah, I mean all the basics, eggs, milk, stuff like that. And then if we're going past that, a lot of veggies too. In the US, there are bags of mini peppers that are packaged. I'm a huge fan of those. And then a really good example that I try not to do as much because they're kind of expensive now is protein shakes. I have my own protein at home, but sometimes I just can't be

bothered to make a full protein shake, so I'll just go get a pretty package one. Yeah, there's probably the biggest things that I'm buying.

I: Perfect. And out of the products that you have just mentioned, did you notice of any of them with sustainable products or use sustainable packaging?

R6: Yes, so the protein shake that I just mentioned, it's called Koia, I'll send it to you later. They claim to be sustainable and they claim to be the better protein shakes on the market. They mentioned how they don't use, let me see, like cows milk for example. Or rather they use soy milk, a blend of like almond and soy and pea protein and stuff like that, which to me signifies some level of sustainability or care. And besides that, like one of the things that I've noticed is, I go to Costco a lot for like bulk shopping. That's where I'll get oat milk, some eggs maybe, just some like very basic stuff that won't, you know, that can last a long time in the fridge or the freezer. And a lot of that stuff is not like super appealing package, which was like there isn't too much green, which is what I like to see. Kind of signifies sustainability for me. It's all pretty bland and I think that is part of their marketing strategy because you know they're not trying to attract customers because they already have them or something.

I: That's good. So how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? So what criteria do you use to determine sustainability?

R6: Yes, we're going to probably go to packaging at least initially. So if they mention on the packaging somewhere that they're, you know, ethically sourced or sustainably sourced, that's a good sign. Usually the color scheme will kind of follow that, so if it follows like a green or like an earthy blue or something like that. Also if they're kind of like natural, I don't know how to phrase this, but like naturally occurring shapes. So you have to kind of like wavy, maybe like a wave. for example. That's a good example. Or like lots of circles, maybe that signifies like the planet… who knows? And then when it goes beyond that, like I said, the maximalist approach that companies take. Like if they mention where their products are from or stuff like that and that's another good way to kind of identify if it's sustainably sourced. And then I will sometimes go online to the company's website afterwards to see if they have any ESG reports. That's very like, something that I don't need to do but maybe I'm curious. Or if I like the product but I'm still kind of second guessing, you know, where it comes from or how it's made or whatever. Or they're just commitments, then I'll go to their website and kind of see what they're doing sustainably.

I: Perfect. And my last question is, what elements of a product make you think that it is eco-friendlier than others, regardless of whether you buy it or not? So what elements of a product do you think you have certain conceptions of being eco-friendlier, regardless of whether you're going to purchase it.

R6: Mm-hmm. Yes, we can the packaging like I mentioned this water bottle is aluminum, not plastic so that's like one example. Um yeah, I think packaging if it's made out of cardboard for

example, or like a wood or something like that. And I think my perception is that it would be easier to recycle, or if it's made out of biodegradable material as well, then I'll kind of go for that. Um, but like I mentioned earlier the colors and the shapes help a lot. I'm doubtful if that like the color and the shape is just like a marketing ploy, or if it's actually you know that I'm making a commitment to being sustainable.

I: So I'm going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify them based on which you believe is the most and least sustainable, and I ask you to provide a brief explanation as to why you feel this way. So let me share my screen.

R6: Okay.

I: Can you see my screen?

R6: Yes.

I: Okay, so what out of these three would you think that is the most sustainable packaging and why?

R6: Um, I'm kind of in between two [glass bottle and aluminum can]. Okay, but I think the can would be good because it looks easy to clean out. It's made out of, I'm assuming, aluminum so you can probably recycle that and that. I'm hoping that the paper on top is also recyclable in some sense. And then the one on the very left, the glass bottle, on the swimming. That one also looks pretty very sustainable. I like the green that kind of signifies earth or sustainability, and yeah, it also seems like it would be easy to clean up as well after the product is done and you're ready to recycle it.

I: Got it. What about these three?

R6: Hmm, yeah, probably the glass one.

I: Okay.

R6: I like the, I don't know, again, like the natural shapes I think that I mentioned earlier. It kind of is a more wavy shape, and it's also made out of glass.

I: Got it.

R6: I'm answering these right, not right, but like you know, in a good way?

I: Oh, you're all good.

R6: Okay. Um, for this one, probably the one on the very right [glass jar]. Um, or the free range, nice good addition, I think that helps a lot too.

I: So you said the right mainly because it's says free range, or because it is also the material?

R6: Oh, yeah the free range helps a lot, like knowing where it comes from.

I: Okay, and which one out of these three would you say the least sustainable?

R6: Probably the one in the middle. It's a lot of plastic. Yeah.

I: Perfect. Then we have these, which are the same or similar packaging materials but different brands.

R6: Um, I'm going to go with Noosa, the one on the very left. I think that, like the shape and everything, like that helps a lot with me as a consumer of art. But I also do really like the middle one [Chobani]. As well, I think that like the soft color, the soft like white signifies a little bit more natural. Yeah, natural and maybe more sustainable.

I: Okay, out of these three?

R6: Hmm… To me, like none of these really looks sustainable. But probably if I were to choose, one on the very right [Simply Orange]. Like the non GMO as well. That to me seems like it would be more sustainable.

I: Okay. What about these three?

R6: Uh, that's crazy. Love butter. Yeah, I really like the left one [Land O' Lakes] and the Kerrygold. So like Land O' Lakes and Kerrygold. Land O'lakes I like the packaging on it. Like having the throwback, I guess, to the nature and trees and stuff like that. That helps a lot and also the green stands out. And then the Kerrygold as well. They also do some good, I guess, throwbacks to the farm and stuff like that so probably those two.

I: What about these three?

R6: Okay, I would say I just like this simple packaging [Bonne Maman]. I think to me this simple packaging might suggest it's just strawberries in this strawberry conserve. And so, you know, the lesser the amount of things within my product to me would signify higher sustainability.

I: Got it. Okay, these three?

R6: Um, I like the Triscuit ones in the very left. Again, throwing it back to like the wheat with the images makes it seem a little bit more sustainable than the other two to me.

I: Okay, And out of these like which would you say is the least sustainable?
R6: Um… Do you still hear me?

I: Yes.

R6: Okay so, I don't know. So I think both are not great, like the Wheat Thin and the Club Crackers. It's just like my knowledge about Kellogg's being a gigantic, I guess and Nabisco also, a gigantic corporation, so that's not just great. I would probably say Wheat Thins in the middle. Actually you know what, no. I don't know, I think both are probably not very sustainable and I probably wouldn't go for either.

I: Okay out of these three which would you pick?

R6: Probably the one on the right [Seventh Generation].

I: Okay

R6: Um. I like the leaf. That makes it seem like they have… maybe it's more sustainable. Like the little symbols underneath, I don't know what they say, but the 0% and then the two little symbols on the side of that. Yeah to me I think I would probably choose one out of these three.

I: Okay sounds good.

R6: And then do I need to include the least sustainable one too?

I: Yeah that would be great.

R6: Okay, I would probably say the Dawn. Oh I also like the middle one, I didn't even see the middle one up there too. Anyways the Dawn one that was probably least sustainable I know the company doesn't have a great reputation so I wouldn't pick that one.

I: And then this is the last group. So these are different brands and different packaging materials.

R6: Nice. Okay let's go with… yeah I like the middle one [Jack's Special]. I think the middle one is… the packaging like the blue, again I really like greens and blues when I buy stuff so I like the blue on the packaging of the Jack's Special one. But I also would say that the one on the left, On The Border, because the packaging is obviously glass. Maybe easier to clean out, but to me it just doesn't scream sustainable like Jack's Special does.

I: Okay, out of these three?

R6: These three, I don't know probably the one on the right [Sunbest]. That one seems simple and I also like the green on it too. Yeah probably most sustainable. And then the least sustainable I would probably say the one in the middle [Honey Bunches] just because the plastic bag, it's not super great. I do like the blue, but that's not going to save it for me.

I: Got it. Okay out of these three?

R6: Um probably most sustainable… I'm not too sure. Most sustainable just based on packaging I would probably say, maybe the one on the right [Volleman's]. I like that it's simple, nothing too fancy is going on, but I think it's closely followed by FairLife. Again, I think I like the blue and I like the call outs of some statistics on the packaging as well. And then I think that's closely followed by the Horizon Organic. I like the green that they have and the packaging as well.

I: Got it. And then the last one we have is these three.

R6: Okay, based on what's sustainable I would probably go with the one on the right [Chameleon]. I like the green and I like the chameleon that they have is the logo which makes it feel more natural. And then I also like the USDA organic they have going on. So I'd probably say that's the most sustainable. And then the least sustainable would probably be the one on the left. I think the kind of colors they used don't really scream sustainability, and also the packaging too, it was a little bit weird. Although I do like the natural, I don't know, like the shape of the bottle… Yeah, more naturally appearing.

I: Okay, and I just have one last follow up question to end the interview. So did you perceive any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands that we've reviewed today? In case you're not familiar with greenwashing, it's defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact. So did you think any of the brands today were purposefully designing their package in a certain way to create a certain perception that may not be true?

R6: Yeah, I think the ones that stand out to me… the butter, the Land O'lakes one. I do really like the packaging, but I think that they're probably so far away removed, so far removed from the trees and the way that they depicted the product. It might have started there but it's definitely not there anymore. And then also the mayo. I'm never… I don't like mayo so I'm never going to get that, but the cage free thing, like that, just doesn't mean anything to me. Just because I've seen documentaries and stuff like that that are against kind of that specific tagline so that probably wouldn't persuade me to buy it. Yeah, those two stand out to me.

I: Well that's all I have so thank you so much for your help I really appreciate it!

R6: Thank you.